

## EDITORIAL.

BOTANISTS ARE a peaceable folk, so peaceable, we are almost inclined to add, as to be apathetic. They seem so averse to anything that has even the semblance of discussion that they will not even express an opinion lest it lead to controversy. If induction is worth anything we can substantiate this by adducing a host of facts on which it is based.

ONE HAS only to look back over the file of the GAZETTE to find that in the past five years there have been suggested numerous questions and movements, some of them of great interest to botanists. These the GAZETTE has presented, sometimes editorially, sometimes through its "Open Letters," and regarding some it has invited and even urged discussion for the guidance of those having the matters in charge. We cannot at this writing recall a single response to these invitations!

NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO the subject of a world's congress of botanists was broached in these pages and we endeavored to find out what our readers thought of the project, its desirability and its feasibility. Several other editorials have appealed for the same information but up to date not a line has come to us touching this matter. The world's congress auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition has now taken it up and proposes to have a botanical congress whether or no. The ideas of the management regarding this particular department are necessarily very general and crude, but it is still quite possible for botanists to direct efforts into proper channels. Will they take enough interest in it to do it? The committee having the preliminary work in charge will shortly issue an address containing a series of questions to which they desire categorical answers. If American botanists have not enough enthusiasm respecting an international congress to express their opinions when asked, we can hardly anticipate that they would have enthusiasm enough to come to such a congress or aid in the entertainment of their guests.

BUT BOTANISTS have a further duty. If they do not approve of the attempt and will not lend both encouragement and assistance, the committee ought to know it in time, so that the American botanists may not be committed to an invitation which they do not extend heartily. Already an announcement has been made by the auxiliary that such a congress is to be held. It remains for the botanists either to direct, it or to let it be known that this invitation if further extended does not come from them, and that it is only a part of the general commercial enterprise. The committee of botanists who have been asked to assist in the arrangements see very many difficulties to be removed before a personal and cordial invitation can be issued. If

proper backing can be secured, moral and financial, they think that a botanical congress can be made highly successful in all respects. The greatest difficulty which they have met so far has been — *your* indifference.

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ANOTHER MATTER of great interest to botanical science is the proposed division of section F of the A. A. A. S. This proposal the GAZETTE opposed when it was made several years ago. We have seen reason to change our minds. Editorially and through the letter of Dr. Halsted, we have endeavored to find out how others regarded the proposition, but we have been unable to extract a single opinion, pro or con. So far as expression of their sentiments is concerned, the botanists might as well be dead!

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## CURRENT LITERATURE.

### A manual of grasses.<sup>1</sup>

The study of the grasses of the United States has long been one of the special functions of the Botanical Division of the Department of Agriculture, and a vast amount of material has been accumulated in the National Herbarium. For many years Dr. George Vasey has been making this great collection of grasses his special care, and his various papers from time to time have testified to his critical study. It has been felt for a number of years that he should put the results of his labors in monograph form, so that botanists in general might share his wide knowledge. In answer to this demand, Volume III of "Contributions from the National Herbarium" opens with the first part of a "Monograph of the Grasses of the United States and British America." The second part, completing the monograph, is promised in a few months. The monograph is in regular manual style, with suitable keys, and a full index which includes synonymy. The author has done a good service to American botany in bringing together our scattered accounts of North American grasses, and the monograph will undoubtedly stimulate the wider study of this very important and very critical group. The Department, as well as the Botanist, is to be congratulated upon the evident desire to cultivate botany for its own sake, and to use some of its money and material in rendering service to the botanical world, as well as to purely agricultural interests.

<sup>1</sup>VASEY, DR. GEO.—Monograph of the Grasses of the United States and British America. Contributions from the U. S. National Herbarium, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. xiv, 89. Issued, Feb. 25, 1892. Government Printing Office, Washington.